



# Freedom's Voice

The Monthly Newsletter of the  
Military History Center

112 N. Main ST  
Broken Arrow, OK 74012  
<http://www.okmhc.org/>



**“Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History”**

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## Merry Christmas & Happy New Year



### Important Dates

December 24 thru January 1 – Christmas/New Year Holidays

#### Military History Center Closed

The MHC will reopen January 2.



**Happy Hanukkah**



### From the Editor

Throughout the year, we have endeavored to bring readers timely news of MHC activities and events, as well as interesting stories. Each month we highlight a specific exhibit or artifact of the museum. The MHC displays artifacts from all America's wars from the Revolutionary War to the present War on Terror. Many of the MHC's artifacts and photographs are unique to the MHC and cannot be found in any other museum.

Artifacts are only part of the story. Our mission is "Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History". That includes written history. We attempt to find and report exceptional stories about exceptional people, focused on Oklahomans. This edition of the newsletter marks the culmination of our series on Oklahoma's Medal of Honor recipients. Over the past two years, we have told the extraordinary stories of thirty-three remarkable Oklahomans.

We enjoy bringing you the newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading it, and with each edition, learning something new about America's military history and those who made it.

### USS Oklahoma Memorial

The USS *Oklahoma* Memorial on Ford Island in Pearl Harbor was constructed in 2007. The memorial honors the 414 sailors and fifteen Marines who died on *Oklahoma*, on December 7, 1941, and the following few days. Less than a third of the men on board when *Oklahoma* was torpedoed escaped. By the time *Oklahoma* was raised in 1943, the men's identification had become separated from their remains. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency is currently engaged in a project to identify the unknowns by DNA matches. Several have already been identified and their remains returned to their families.



USS Oklahoma Memorial on Ford Island – Pearl Harbor – Each post is inscribed with the name of a man, who died on the ship.

### Welcome Home!

**1<sup>st</sup> BN, 279<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment  
45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team**

## Day of Infamy

Seventy-six years ago, at 7:55 a.m. Hawaii time (11:55 a.m. Oklahoma time), on Sunday, December 7, 1941, 353 Japanese fighters, bombers and torpedo planes launched in two waves from six aircraft carriers, began their attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. All eight battleships moored at the base were damaged, with four being sunk – *Arizona*, *California*, *Oklahoma* and *West Virginia*. The Japanese also sank or damaged three cruisers, three destroyers, an anti-aircraft training ship and one minelayer, destroyed 188 aircraft, almost all on the ground, killed 2,402 Americans, almost half of them aboard *Arizona*, and wounded 1,282 more. The Japanese were fixated on the battleships and failed to attack such important base installations as the power station, shipyard, maintenance, fuel and torpedo storage facilities, as well as the submarine piers and headquarters buildings, which included the intelligence section.

*California* and *West Virginia* were raised, repaired and re-entered the war. *Oklahoma* was raised in 1943, but was too badly damaged to be repaired and was sold for scrap. While under tow to San Francisco in 1947, 540 miles out of Pearl Harbor the tow lines parted, and the once grand, old lady sank in 18,000 feet of water, avoiding the indignity of being cut up for scrap. *Arizona* rests on the bottom of Pearl Harbor as a memorial and a tomb for 1,177 of her crew.

Japanese losses were light: twenty-nine aircraft and five midget submarines. Sixty-five Japanese airmen were killed or wounded. Nine sailors aboard midget submarines died, and one submariner was captured after his submarine ran aground.

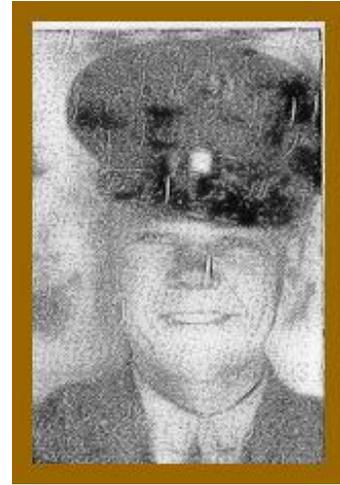
On the day following the attack – December 8 – Congress declared war on Japan. Germany and Italy declared war on the United States on December 11, which was reciprocated by the United States the same day.

Because of the lack of a declaration of war or any warning by the Japanese government, while good-faith negotiations were ongoing, President Roosevelt called December 7, 1941, “a date which will live in infamy.”



USS *Arizona* Memorial

## USS *Oklahoma* MIA Comes Home



PVT Vernon P. Keaton – 1941

Marine Corps PVT Vernon P. Keaton was serving aboard USS *Oklahoma* on December 7, 1941. Whether he was killed in the attack or died after the ship went down is unknown. In January 1942, the Department of the Navy declared him KIA and removed him from the Marine Corps rolls. He was just eighteen years old. He was one of the fifteen Marines still on board when *Oklahoma* went down. By the time the ship was raised two years later, the bodies were unidentifiable. PVT Keaton's remains were buried in a mass grave with other recovered remains. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency began exhuming the bodies in 2015 in an attempt to identify them with DNA samples provided by family members. On August 24, 2017, the Agency announced that PVT Keaton's remains had been identified.

Vernon Paul “Buck” Keaton was born at Denver City (or Breckenridge), Texas, on May 25, 1923. He was one month short of graduation from Denver City High School, when he dropped out and joined the Marine Corps on May 21, 1941. His father had been seriously injured in a work accident, and was unable to continue working. Young Vernon joined the Marine Corps to help his family financially. He received his basic training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at San Deigo. After basic training, he was selected for sea duty. After completing Sea School, also at San Deigo, he was sent to the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, where he was subsequently posted to USS *Oklahoma*. On December 7, he had been on board for only two weeks.

At some point, his parents moved to the unincorporated community of Lula, southeast of Ada in Pontotoc County, Oklahoma. His mother had been born in Wetumka, not far from the area, and family members probably still lived in the area. Vernon Keaton was laid to rest with full military honors near his parents in Lula Cemetery on November 16. His decorations include a Purple Heart and World War II Victory Medal. On February 20, 1942, the Marine Corps League of Lubbock, Texas, was named the Vernon P. Keaton Detachment.

## PVT Vernon Keaton's Burial Service

Marine Corps Private Vernon Keaton died in combat seventy-six years ago this month on December 7, 1941. He went down with his ship, *USS Oklahoma*. His body remained on board until the ship was raised two years later. By then, it was unidentifiable and remained so until three months ago. On Thursday afternoon, November 16, PVT Keaton was finally laid to rest with full military honors near his parents in the small, rural Lula Cemetery in southeast Pontotoc County, Oklahoma.

He was escorted to the cemetery by Patriot Guard Riders, and from there escorted to his burial site by a Marine Corps Honor Guard. The service ended with a Marine Corps Lt. Colonel presenting the flag to PVT Keaton's family, a 21-gun salute by members of the Honor Guard and a Navy Petty Officer First Class blowing *Taps*.



*Semper fidelis*

## In Memoriam



Leo Haas – 1942

Leo Francis Haas, Jr. was born at Muskogee, Oklahoma, on September 25, 1923. His family later moved to Tulsa, where he attended Holy Family School. After graduating high school, he attended the University of Tulsa. He left TU after one semester intent on enlisting in the Navy. Once in the Navy, he was accepted for flight training. After receiving his wings at Pensacola Naval Air Station, Florida, he took time out to marry and then immediately headed west to California.

In the Pacific Theater, he was assigned to a Navy Patrol Bombing Squadron – VB-109, a glide bomber squadron. The squadron flew PB4 Liberators, a modified version of the Army Air Force B-24 Liberator bomber. They fought over most of the central Pacific, including at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. They lost forty-nine men during the war, destroyed 309 Japanese ships of various sizes and shot down about 100 enemy aircraft. After the Japanese agreed to surrender, VB-109 escorted the Japanese delegation from Japan to Okinawa. (The delegation was flown in U.S. aircraft from Okinawa to Manila to receive surrender instructions.)

After the war, Mr. Haas returned to the University of Tulsa to finish his education. He worked for Carter Oil Company for several years. He later obtained a real estate license and founded Leo Haas, Inc., a commercial real estate brokerage.

He was honored as the featured speaker at the MHC End of World War II Commemoration in August 2016. Because of his age, two of his daughters gave his presentation. (See the August and September 2016 newsletters.)

Leo Francis Haas departed this life on November 9, 2017. He was interred in Rose Hill Memorial Cemetery in Tulsa.



Insignia of Squadron VB-109

## Oklahoma's Pearl Harbor Survivors

This year, Oklahoma lost three Pearl Harbor survivors. Joe Gene Allsup died on January 17, at age ninety-four. He was born November 22, 1922, at Owasso, Oklahoma. He enlisted in the Navy in 1941, right out of high school.

On December 7, he was stationed at Kaneohe Naval Air Station, thirteen miles from Pearl Harbor. He had just finished his overnight shift, when the attack began. Allsup said he grabbed his Browning automatic rifle and began returning fire. The Japanese focused their attack at Kaneohe on the PBY seaplanes lined-up along the runway. After destroying all but six of the thirty-three seaplanes, the Japanese pilots flew on to Pearl Harbor, their primary target.

After the war, Allsup returned to Oklahoma. He lived the past several years of his life in Tulsa. He is buried in Floral Haven Cemetery in Broken Arrow. (We could find no information on Joe Allsup's wartime activities after Pearl Harbor, or what he did after the war.)

\* \* \* \* \*

One day after Joe Allsup's death, James Arlon "Jim" Jenkins died at age ninety-eight, on January 18. Jim Jenkins was a Marine Corps corporal assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineering Battalion at the Marine Barracks inside the Pearl Harbor base. The men were living in tents while their barracks were being built. The noise of the attack awakened Jenkins. He ran out to see what it was all about and saw a falling airplane on fire (presumably Japanese). He went back into his tent and grabbed his bolt-action rifle, which with light machine guns, were the only weapons the Marine engineers had.

After Pearl Harbor, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineers were broken up, and he was transferred to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Battalion. Jenkins served on Guadalcanal, where his unit helped build air strips. Later, he was on Saipan and Guam during the Marianas Campaign. His unit landed on Iwo Jima on D-Day+1. Jenkins said he lost two years of his life on Iwo Jima. After Iwo Jima, his unit returned to Guam to train replacements for the invasion of Japan. Instead of invasion, he would be part of the occupation. His unit was sent to Nagasaki where he saw the devastation of the atomic bomb. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineers built roads and bridges in Japan.

Jim Jenkins was born at Checotah (McIntosh County), Oklahoma on April 3, 1918. One day in 1940, he was walking the streets of Tulsa looking for a job, when he spotted a Marine Corps recruiting poster in a Post Office window. With the promise of a job and the opportunity for adventure, he signed up.

After his discharge from the Marine Corps in 1946, Jenkins returned to Oklahoma. He went on to become a licensed engineer. His last job was with the Tulsa Airport Authority, where he worked for eighteen years, retiring in 1983. He is buried in Floral Haven Cemetery in Broken Arrow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eugene William "Gene" Meeker was born at Wichita, Kansas, on November 9, 1922. His family relocated to Tulsa, when

he was a boy. He grew up in west Tulsa and left high school early to join the Navy. Like Joe Allsup, he was stationed at Kaneohe Naval Air Station on December 7, 1941. After Pearl Harbor, Meeker was trained as a Navy aircraft gunner. He remained in that job for only a short time before being reassigned to his original occupation of servicing aircraft. He served on Guadalcanal and other Pacific locations. He separated from the Navy in 1947.

After the war, Meeker returned to Oklahoma, eventually settling in Sand Springs. He went on to a 35-year career with American Airlines. On July 3, Gene Meeker died at age ninety-four. He is buried in Woodland Memorial Park Cemetery in Sand Springs.

The Last Man Club: At this writing, Oklahoma has only two remaining Pearl Harbor survivors – Arles Cole of Tulsa and Lonnie Cook of Morris.

### In Memoriam



Joe Gene Allsup



James Arlon Jenkins



Eugene William "Gene" Meeker

## President Roosevelt's Pearl Harbor Speech

"Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 – a date, which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.

Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American island of Oahu, the Japanese ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And, while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time, the Japanese government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu. (Ed. That was a false report.)

Yesterday, the Japanese government also launched an attack against Malaya.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night, the Japanese attacked Wake Island.

And, this morning, the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense. But always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost, but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph – so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941,

state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire."



President Roosevelt delivering his war message to Congress. Behind him are Vice President Henry A. Wallace (left) and Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn. On the President's left, in uniform, is his son, James, who escorted his father to the Capitol. At the time, James Roosevelt was a Captain in the Marine Corps Reserve. He would later go on active duty and serve as executive officer of the Marine Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Raider Battalion. Because of his poor health, he was transferred from the Raiders in 1943, but remained on active duty and served in other assignments throughout the war.

Thirty-three minutes after the President's speech, Congress declared war on the Empire of Japan, with only one dissent, Congresswoman Jeanette Rankin of Montana, who had also voted against the war resolution in 1917. Rankin was not a pacifist, but rather an early-day radical feminist. Because women were not allowed combat assignments, she refused to vote to send men into combat. Hers was a cynical position taken without regard for the welfare of the nation, as she well knew that war had been thrust upon the U.S. in both instances. In the end, her votes were meaningless gestures.

### Year-end Giving

As the year draws to a close, many of you will be contemplating your year-end giving. We realize that most of you are committed to your church and/or favorite charity. If you have a place in your budget for discretionary giving, we ask you to consider the Military History Center. We believe the MHC provides a valuable service to the local community, especially to our veterans and to students. We invite you to join us in "Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History" and in recognizing the sacrifices our veterans have made, and are making, to keep America free.

Please go to the Support/Donate link on our website at [www.okmhc.org](http://www.okmhc.org) for more information.

Monetary donations, as well as gifts in kind, are tax deductible, subject to IRS regulations. Record your donation on Schedule A as MVA, Inc. dba Military History Center.

## This Month's Featured Exhibit

## USS *Batfish*



*Batfish* (SSN 310) is best remembered for sinking three Japanese submarines within seventy-six hours in February 1945. *Batfish's* World War II service began on December 4, 1943, and continued until August 26, 1945. During that time, she completed seven war patrols and is credited with sinking 10,658 tons of Japanese merchant shipping and naval vessels. She operated in the Philippine Sea, Luzon Strait and South China Sea. *Batfish* received the Presidential Unit Citation for sinking the three submarines on her sixth war patrol. She was also awarded six battle stars for her World War II service.

After the end of World War II, *Batfish* was ordered to San Francisco, and then sent to Mare Island Shipyard at Vallejo, California, for a complete overhaul. After the overhaul, *Batfish* was decommissioned on April 6, 1946, and converted to a training boat for the Pacific Reserve Fleet. In 1952, she was recommissioned and assigned to Division 122, U.S. Atlantic Fleet. From May 5, 1957, until her final decommissioning on November 1, 1969, she served as a training boat and auxiliary research submarine. *Batfish* had served for twenty-six years.

In 1969, Mr. Henry Primeaux, a *Batfish* veteran, and other Oklahoma submarine veterans began their efforts to preserve *Batfish* as a museum and to locate her in Oklahoma. Their efforts came to fruition on April 4, 1973, when *Batfish* was set in place in Muskogee's War Memorial Park.

Click on the following link for a video tour of USS *Batfish* and a dramatization of the sinking of three Japanese submarines in seventy-six hours. Turn on your speakers, and expand to full screen. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLGM\\_EpFYKA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uLGM_EpFYKA)



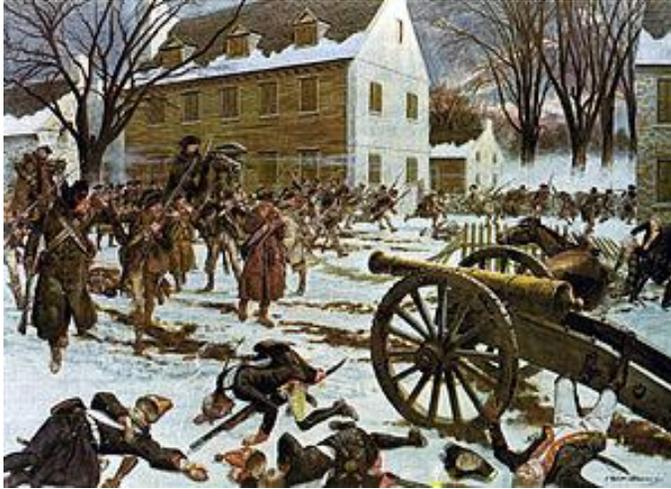
USS *Batfish* at War Memorial Park

The above three photographs show several types of Navy uniforms from different modern periods on display in the Jane and Henry Primeaux Media Room. Mr. Primeaux, a Navy veteran, who served on the submarine, USS *Batfish*, during the Cold War, sponsored the Media Room. There are also a number of naval-themed prints and photographs and several naval artifacts on display in the Media Room. In addition to the Navy militaria, the MHC has several hundred military and military-themed movies useful to the researcher. They can be viewed using video equipment located in the Media Room.



Insignia of the Submarine Service  
gold for officers, silver for enlisted personnel

## George Washington's Christmas Gift to America



*Battle of Trenton, by H. Charles McBarron, Jr.*

Two hundred, forty-one years ago this month, in December 1776, only five months after their Declaration of Independence, the American colonists' bid for independence appeared to be on the verge of failure. The British and their German (primarily Hessian) mercenaries had driven George Washington from Long Island, Manhattan Island and all the way across New Jersey to the Delaware River, the border with Pennsylvania.

Washington had lost hundreds of men killed and captured, mostly the latter, in battles with the British. Hundreds more had deserted. Of the men still in the ranks, most were on short-term enlistments, and those enlistments were about to expire. After crossing into Pennsylvania, Washington knew he had to act, or else the Revolution could be lost. He came up with an audacious plan to re-cross the Delaware and attack a brigade of Hessians occupying Trenton, New Jersey. This would be a daring and risky undertaking. The weather was abominable. It was bitterly cold, and snow was falling heavily. Most of the soldiers were barely clothed. Some actually had no shoes. The Delaware was clogged with ice. Washington would have to move his men at night, without light or noise. To achieve success, the attack would have to be a complete surprise.

The plan was daring and risky, but not reckless. Washington had a large network of spies and informers in British headquarters in New York City and throughout central and northern New Jersey, so he knew the size of the Trenton garrison. He knew they were isolated at Trenton and would receive no reinforcements. He also reckoned that the Hessians would not be expecting an attack in the terrible weather and on Christmas, or at night. That's not how European armies fought. He also suspected the Hessians would be celebrating Christmas well into the night and would be drunk or badly hungover. Washington also counted on British (and Hessian) hubris and their dismissive behavior toward himself and the fighting quality of American soldiers.

Washington assembled his men and had Thomas Paine's just printed pamphlet, *The Crisis*, read to them: "THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sun-

shine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly. ... ." Washington promised his men that if they stayed with him, he would personally guarantee their unpaid salaries. Paine's uplifting words and Washington's personal promise worked.

With all the difficulties that lay before him, Washington successfully got his small "army" over the Delaware and the ten miles to Trenton, without detection, although four hours behind schedule. They arrived in the early morning hours of December 26. Surprise was complete. The Americans were on the Hessians before they could organize their firing lines. When their commander, Colonel Johann Rall, was mortally wounded, resistance fell apart. The entire brigade was killed, wounded or captured – more than 900 prisoners. Washington's only dead were two men who had succumbed to exposure during the march to Trenton. Washington had German speaking American soldiers escort the prisoners into the Pennsylvania backcountry and had them dispersed into German speaking villages, where they would work for the remainder of the war. Hundreds refused repatriation after the war. Washington sent the captured Hessian battle flags and drums to Congress.

The stunning victory reinvigorated Washington's army and raised the morale of patriots throughout the thirteen states. Trenton arguably saved the Revolution. Had Washington not attacked or had the attack failed, his army would likely have dissolved and he dismissed in disgrace. One can only speculate about the outcome of the Revolution, but it may not have ended with the complete independence of all the colonies, maybe none of them. George Washington's Christmas victory at Trenton was an invaluable gift to America.



Emanuel Leutze's fanciful painting – *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. The man holding the flag is future President, LT James Monroe, one of Washington's aides-de-camp. General Nathaneal Greene is shown leaning over the side of the boat. There are several inaccuracies in the painting, one being the flag, which didn't exist at the time. It was also the dark of night and snowing. The painting has become an American icon, notwithstanding the many inaccuracies.



George Price Hays was a First Lieutenant serving in France with the 10<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, on July 14, 1918. On that day, during the Second Battle of the Marne (from which the Division received its nickname – “Rock of the Marne”) near Greves Farm, his unit came under a heavy German artillery barrage. For his heroic actions on that day, 1LT Hays received the Medal of Honor on December 31, 1919.

His Medal of Honor Citation reads in part: “At the very outset of the unprecedented artillery bombardment by the enemy, his line of communication was destroyed beyond repair. Despite the hazard attached to the mission of runner, he immediately set out to establish contact with the neighboring post of command and further establish liaison with two French batteries, visiting their position so frequently that he was mainly responsible for the accurate fire therefrom. While thus engaged, seven horses were shot under him, and he was severely wounded. His activity under most severe fire was an important factor in checking the advance of the enemy”.

George Price Hays was born September 27, 1892, at Chefoo, China. Both his parents and maternal grandparents were long-time China missionaries. When Hays was nine years old, his family returned to the United States, where his father became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of El Reno, Oklahoma. After graduating from El Reno High School and Oklahoma A&M College (Oklahoma State University), he entered the Army at Okarche, Oklahoma, shortly after the United States entered World War I. He was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.

After World War I, Hays went on to a distinguished career in the Army. Between the world wars, he taught military science and tactics at Cornell University. He commanded the 99<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion from 1940 until shortly before the U.S. entered World War II. His first action of the war was at the Battle of Monte Casino in Italy. He later commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division artillery in Normandy in 1944. In November 1944, Hayes returned to the U.S., where he was given command of the newly organized 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. He returned to Italy with the Division in January 1945 and led it throughout the remainder of the war. In 1949, Hays was appointed High Commissioner for the U.S. Occupation Zone in Germany. In 1952, he commanded U.S. occupations forces in Austria. Hays retired as a Lieutenant General in 1953.

George Price Hays died on September 7, 1978, at Pinehurst, North Carolina. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



In February 1945, PFC Manuel Pérez, Jr. was serving in the Philippines as a member of Co. A, 511<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne “Angels” Division, whose mission was to take Fort William McKinley in Manila. On February 13, as the 511<sup>th</sup> PIR approached the fort, it encountered a strong enemy fortified sector. The sector consisted of cement pillboxes armed with .50-caliber dual-purpose machine guns, which defended the entrance to the fort. PFC Pérez survived that mission, but was killed in action a month later, on March 14. On December 27, 1945, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor (accredited to Illinois) for his heroic actions at Fort William McKinley. PFC Perez’s Medal of Honor Citation:

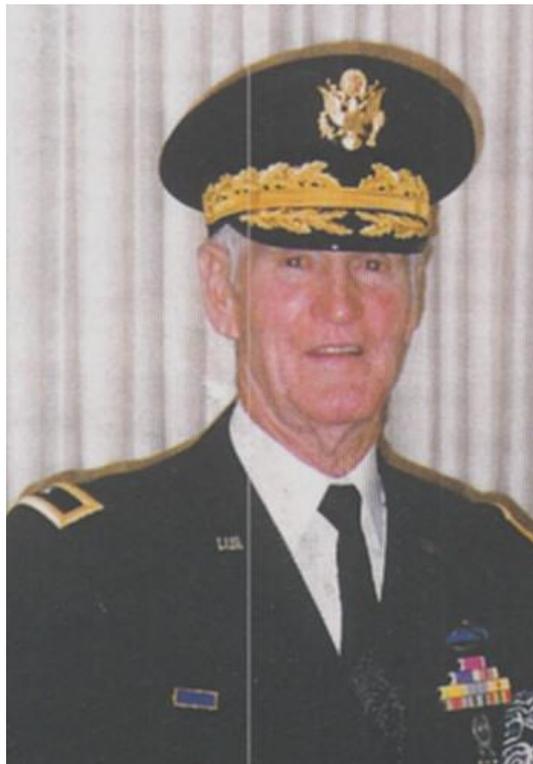
“He was lead scout for Company A, which had destroyed 11 of 12 pillboxes in a strongly fortified sector defending the approach to enemy-held Fort William McKinley on Luzon, Philippine Islands. In the reduction of these pillboxes, he killed 5 Japanese in the open and blasted others in pillboxes with grenades. Realizing the urgent need for taking the last emplacement, which contained 2 twin-mount .50-caliber dual-purpose machineguns, he took a circuitous route to within 20 yards of the position, killing 4 of the enemy in his advance. He threw a grenade into the pillbox, and, as the crew started withdrawing through a tunnel just to the rear of the emplacement, shot and killed 4 before exhausting his clip. He had reloaded and killed 4 more when an escaping Japanese threw his rifle with fixed bayonet at him. In warding off this thrust, his own rifle was knocked to the ground. Seizing the Jap rifle, he continued firing, killing 2 more of the enemy. He rushed the remaining Japanese, killed 3 of them with the butt of the rifle and entered the pillbox, where he bayoneted the 1 surviving hostile soldier. Single-handedly, he killed 18 of the enemy in neutralizing the position that had held up the advance of his entire company. Through his courageous determination and heroic disregard of grave danger, Pfc. Perez made possible the successful advance of his unit toward a valuable objective and provided a lasting inspiration for his comrades”.

Manuel “Manny” Pérez, Jr. was born in Oklahoma City on March 3, 1923. At a young age, he went to live with his father in Chicago, from where he enlisted in the Army. After basic training, the Army sent him to paratrooper school.

PFC Pérez was buried with full military honors in Fairlawn Cemetery in Oklahoma City. He was twenty-two years old.

## Bidding Farewell to a Friend

COL Ray Bachlor (U.S. Army, Ret.) gave the following eulogy at the funeral of his long-time friend, BG Leslie Willard Lane, Sr. on December 17, 2003.



Brigadier General Leslie Willard Lane, Sr.  
April 18, 1916 – December 12, 2003

“About four score and seven years have passed since Leslie W. Lane was born in Walt Hill, Nebraska. He was the sixth of eight children born to Dallas and Clara Lane and the family moved to Wyoming while he was quite young. That young child reached manhood, middle age, old age, and is now dead.

Early on that trip, Les borrowed traits from people he admired most and then freely gave them back to all whose lives he touched. From his parents, he learned FAITH – faith in his maker, faith in himself, faith in his fellow man, and from the many chores in the large farm family, he learned the value of RESPONSIBILITY and HARD WORK.

His love of sports manifested itself early in life and after high school, he received a scholarship to play both basketball and football at the University of South Dakota. His football coach, Harry Gamage, taught him the value of setting GOALS, of LOYALTY and TEAMWORK. He and “coach” became lifelong friends and confidants. In his senior year, “Rawhide” Lane was selected as an ALL AMERICAN tackle by *Colliers* magazine and ALL CONFERENCE in both basketball and football. Later, he was voted into the University of South Dakota HALL OF FAME. He was drafted by George “Papa Bear” Halas’ Chicago Bears, but that promising career was cut short in 1941 when he honored his college ROTC commitment and joined the Army as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant of Infantry.

At Camp Walters, Texas, he met and courted a beautiful young nurse – 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Lois Murray – and, even though she outranked him, they were married on April 18, 1942. He was subsequently assigned to the Pacific Theatre, where in late 1943 he volunteered to join a new elite group (the 5307<sup>th</sup> Composite Group, Provisional) that was to be known as Merrill’s Marauders. The Japanese had over-run the Philippines and the Malay peninsula. Fierce fighting was going on in Guadalcanal and New Guinea in defense of the Australian continent. The Marauder’s goal was to prevent the Japanese from cutting the Burma Road – the only supply route to China. To do this they had to range far behind Japanese lines to interdict, harass and disrupt enemy movement, communications and re-supply. They were supplied only intermittently by airdrops when they could be located in the jungle and could clear a drop zone. They often had inadequate food, medicine and ammunition. Sometimes they dug grubs from rotting logs for food, drank bacteria infested swamp water, and malaria was ever-present without the precious quinine. Every day they faced steaming jungles, swamps, mountains, ants, thorns, insects, leeches, leg sores, blisters, infections, and blazing sun or torrential rain. The monsoons brought 175 inches of rain in 1943.

Despite all obstacles the Rangers traveled over 1,000 miles on foot during the nine-month Burma Campaign that culminated with their winning a pitched battle with Japanese forces for the airfield at Myitkyina. Possession of the airfield permitted bringing in and re-supplying larger units to patrol and secure the road. It ended the Japanese dominance of Burma. The Marauders never left any of their killed or wounded behind. This fact spooked the Japanese, for they had no physical evidence of who they were fighting. The unit was disbanded on August 10, 1944 – mission accomplished!

The unit was given a Presidential Citation for their heroics, and it was the only unit in the history of the Army in which every man received the Bronze Star for Valor. To this, Les added another Bronze Star and a Purple Heart.

The Lane’s decision to make Tulsa their home after the war followed a long and exhausting study of many factors: (1) Oklahoma was Lois’s home; (2) hunting quail was more challenging than antelope; and (3) there were more good golfing days in Oklahoma than in Wyoming – case closed! They settled down in Tulsa where he became a Special Representative for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and the father of three wonderful children and the grandfather of three.

In 1946, Captain Lane found the newly organized post war Army Reserve in chaos and he set about helping to right the ship. He later commanded the 377<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Tulsa and was ultimately the Assistant Division Commander. Many think that an officer must be a hard disciplinarian, and sometimes that is true, but he also leads by example. A commander is referred to as “the old man”, a person of wisdom, compassion, faith, loyalty, trustworthiness and a team player, who knows his troops and puts their welfare before his own. General Lane possessed all of these traits and more. He learned them a long time ago and has shared them with many throughout the course of his long life. All who knew Les have had their lives enriched.

I have known and served with Les Lane since 1948. He has been like a second father to my children. (Incidentally Les, they never promoted you that last time. You will always be COLONEL LANE to them)

Today, we honor an ordinary American – an ordinary American cut from the same cloth as the Minutemen who fought at Concord. A man who would cheerfully sacrifice a promising career to endure untold hardships and the constant threat of death in a far-off land in defense of his family, friends and country. Today, there are many others who have made this life altering decision and are serving in far-off countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Our thanks and our prayers go out to them and to their families for their sacrifice.

Les Lane was one of the finest people I have ever known. By his actions and his life, he demonstrated his love of family, friends, comrades in arms and his country. I know we shall all miss him very, very much”!

*Editor – General Lane is buried in Memorial Park Cemetery in Tulsa.*

## 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division

The 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was first constituted on September 4, 1918, in the national army (draftees). The Division was organized with the 189<sup>th</sup> and the 190<sup>th</sup> Infantry brigades of the Oklahoma organized reserve. The Division was slated to be deployed overseas to fight in World War I, but before it was fully trained, the Armistice was signed ending the war. The Division was demobilized in December 1918. It was reconstituted in 1921 in the organized reserves. From then until 1942, it remained a reserve unit based in Oklahoma City.

The 95<sup>th</sup> ID was reorganized in 1942 around two infantry reserve regiments: the 377<sup>th</sup> Infantry, which had been organized in 1921 with its headquarters in Tulsa and the 378<sup>th</sup> Infantry, organized in 1922 with headquarters in McAlester. Four artillery battalions and the usual support units were also assigned to the 95<sup>th</sup>. The Division trained in the United States for the next two years.

The 95<sup>th</sup> sailed for Europe on August 10, 1944. Once established in France, it underwent further training. The Division was assigned to the XX Corps of General Patton’s Third Army. The 95<sup>th</sup> entered combat on October 19 in the Moselle bridgehead sector east of Moselle and south of Metz. The ancient city of Metz was surrounded by several well-defended, steel reinforced concrete forts. The city and the forts proved to be a hard nut to crack, but Patton was determined to have the city. XX Corps launched the final attack on November 3, and by the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Metz was in American hands.

The 95<sup>th</sup> pushed east, seizing a Saar River bridge on December 3 and engaged in bitter house-to-house fighting in the city of Saarlautern. The Saar bridgehead was firmly established by December 19. On February 2, 1945, the Division began moving to the Maastricht area in the Netherlands, and by February 14, elements were in the line near Meerselo in relief of British units. The Division was now assigned to Ninth Army.

On February 23, the Division was relieved, and assembled near Jülich, Germany, for the push to the Rhine. Elements of the 95<sup>th</sup> were engaged in continuous combat through March

12. It assembled east of the Rhine at Beckum, and launched an attack across the Lippe river on April 3. After clearing an enemy pocket north of the Ruhr and Möhne rivers, the Division took Werl and Unna on April 9-10, and Dortmund on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The 95<sup>th</sup> maintained these positions until the end of the war.



The 378<sup>th</sup> Infantry, 95<sup>th</sup> ID entered Metz on November 17, 1944, where the 95<sup>th</sup> earned the designation – “Iron Men of Metz”.

The 95<sup>th</sup> ID compiled an impressive war record during its seven months of combat in France, the Netherlands and Germany. The Division was demobilized on October 15, 1945. It was reactivated on May 13, 1947, at Oklahoma City, as a reserve unit. The 95<sup>th</sup> has since undergone several reorganizations and different headquarters locations. It exists today as the 95<sup>th</sup> Training Division, headquartered at Fort Sill.



95<sup>th</sup> Infantry “Victory” Division  
The 95<sup>th</sup>’s special designation is  
“Iron Men of Metz”.

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